

The Princess Thief

by PtoxisPrincess

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Summary: After many failed attempts to take the Amulet of Avalor, Cedric steals a young princess Sofia away and locks her in an invisible tower, raising her as his own. Sofia's memory of her real family fades as the years go on, but Cedric's intent still remains a mystery. Has he fallen for her, or is there a much darker motive?

1. Kidnapped

****Author's Note:** This story is supposed to be a cross between Tangled and The Hunchback of Notre Dame. It is not really a crossover since the only characters will be from Sofia the First. This is going to be an unethical story with some dark themes, so please keep an open mind.**

* * *

><p>He was kind. He was always kind. But he could also be cold. There were so many rules for her to follow under his roof, and at times, it felt like too much to bear. She considered herself a well-behaved girl, but on the rare occasions that she did slip up, she would be scolded and punished. The punishments in and of themselves were not too cruel, but she would never be absolved from them without an adequate lesson learned, ensuring she would never commit the same offense twice with him. The punishments would consist of simple penances, such as staying locked in her room for the night, or having to do extra cleaning in the tower, but the worst part of her exoneration was his ominous disapproval of her actions. She hated seeing him angry with her, not because it was terrifying, but because she wanted him to love her.<p>

He never required her to refer to him as her master, or even her father, but merely by his name. Their relationship was decent at best. He would only leave the tower when he needed to fetch more food or some other necessity and would require her to help him into his

cloak when he left. She would follow him down the spiraling wooden steps of the tall tower's entryway and watch the thick woolen fabric slide over his slender shoulders as she held it out for him. He would then gently pull her close to him and tenderly kiss her forehead before his leaving, and step out the door into the sunny, colorful world that she would never know again and lock her in the tower. It was always sad when he left, her not knowing when his return would be, but she tried her best to make sure he would be happy and comfortable when he came back. She would clean and prepare their evening meal during his absence. She would set the table and pour the wine, boil the water and chop the vegetables. She knew he loved her cooking, and she loved sharing meals with him. They would sit together at a small wooden table decorated with a lacy runner and make small talk as they consumed the hot meals. He did not allow her to drink wine, only water. Even though she was well beyond the age of adulthood in their era, he insisted wine was a drink much too strong for a frail creature such as herself. But she did not complain. His sets of instructions and rules were always benign. She believed them to be to her own benefit, as the things he told her were often true. Once, she sneaked a sip of wine from his glass while he was out just to try it. She never understood what made the liquid so important, whether it be the taste or the effects it had on the body, but she had seen him take one glass every night unphased, and thought perhaps there was no danger in the substance. She tried a small mouthful and decided that she liked it. She took another sip, and another, until the entire glass was empty. She poured another glass to replace the liquid, telling herself that he would not notice a glassful of the content missing from the bottle. But he did. He kept a set of tally marks on the bottle to keep track of the content and knew exactly how much space between the lines would equal one glassful of wine. When he had returned home, the girl was giddy and red in the face. He grabbed the bottle and saw the line of liquid had gone down three notches. He immediately sent her to bed and said her punishment would be the hangover she would experience the following morning. He was right. Her head had never pounded so hard, and she had never felt sicker. She could not even eat that day. She swore to him that she would never drink wine again, and he accepted her apology, but kept the bottle under lock and key to ensure this scenario would never happen again.

She believed she was his treasure, guarded and protected closely. She had to be. He could have thrown her out on the street, but he didn't. He had already gotten what he wanted from her, but he chose to keep her as well anyway. Why? Maybe, even though he had taken her away from everything and everyone she knew and loved, he still had some soft spot for her. It had been fifteen years since her kidnapping, but she could remember the day well.

It was a dark and rainy night. She did not know how he managed to enter her bedroom, but she remembered being shaken awake and told to fetch her coat and shoes and come quietly with him. She asked him where they were going at this hour, but he didn't answer. He led her silently down the halls by the hand and out the back of the castle to the stable, where they took a flying horse and small chariot far, far away. As each minute pressed on, the young princess folded her arms tighter and tighter around her waist and started to cry. It was beginning to occur to her that this was not some quick excursion. What made the situation dig a deeper hole into her stomach was the fact that Cedric, someone she had known and trusted, was the one behind it.

"Where are we going, Mr. Cedric?" her voice quaked.

He didn't answer.

"Where are we going?" She asked again.

"Far away," he muttered, his voice trailing off.

She noticed a small brown bag stuffed to capacity beside him, but decided not to ask about it. Probably for the better, as he seemed in a very dark mood. She turned away from him and let the rain wash away her tears.

When they finally landed, the rain had stopped, and so had her tears. She had drifted into a slumber. It was easy, since he cast a spell around their vehicle to protect them from the rain and wind. It had been a few hours since their secret departure, and now the sun was donning on the horizon. Birds began chirping, and the blueness of the night sky faded into a colorful gradient on the east. She roused at his touch and the sound of shuffling. She quickly rubbed away the sleep in her eyes, and when she opened them, she gasped at the sight of a very tall, dark, stony tower standing in the middle of a heavily wooded area. The dark gray structure, with seemingly only one window, reached up and peaked its faded wooden roof at just the level of the tall trees' canopy.

"What are we doing here?" She asked, following him off of the chariot and toward the ugly tower.

With a slap of his wand against the beast's flank, he sent the horse and chariot flying away back to the castle, cleansing him of the trail of evidence to where he had taken the small princess.

"Sofia," he said softly after what seemed to be a moment's hesitation, "This is our new home. You are not a princess anymore. Once you enter this tower, you will never leave it."

The young girl stood there, blinking in shock. "Are you...kidnapping me?" Her tone wavered, struggling to put forth the difficult words.

"It has already been done." He answered flatly.

"But...why? What about my mom and dad? What about James and Amber?"

"You will forget about them, in time," worried she might try to run for help, though they were miles and miles away from Enchancia in a strange place, he grabbed her roughly by the wrist and dragged her into the tower, locking the door behind them. "I am your only family now."

Her amulet was stripped from her, now locked away in a secret place of which she did not know, where he would tamper with it daily behind closed doors. He told her she did not need the item anymore, and that it was too dangerously powerful for such a young girl. When the girl started crying for her precious trinket, he sighed and handed her his favorite wand, telling her he would make up for the loss with an apprenticeship learning powerful magic. She reluctantly agreed,

knowing she could not go up against the sorcerer in her current small state.

He cast a permanent spell on the tower so it would be invisible to anyone else aside from them. To the naked eye, the plot of land was merely an isolated alcove of weeds and overgrown forest. Further ensuring their privacy, he cast a spell on himself anytime he would leave the tower as his disguise, so as not to be recognized by anyone who might be looking for them. There would be no need for a disguise for her since she would never leave the tower.

...But that was fifteen years ago. She was twenty four years old now. She could not exactly place the age of her beloved old sorcerer, especially since she was well-mannered enough not to ask his age in the first place, but he seemed to be in between a father figure and a good friend to her.

She was hoping he would let her leave the tower with good behavior, but it was a failed hope. She would truly never leave. He would not even let her open the window in the daytime to look at the world and imbibe the fresh air for fear she would try to scale down the tower with a rope or her bare hands. Unbeknownst to him, she would creep out of her bedroom while he was sleeping in the other end of the tower behind a closed door, making her way to the clear panes that opened up to her a world long forgotten. She would gaze out in wonder at the ground below, aching to touch the grass again and smell the beautiful flowers. A hauntingly melodic song seeped from the open window every night, this precious time frame being her only freedom to be heard of the outside world. Her voice was like a quivering violin, sweet and sad. It told long stories of her troubles and of her loneliness.

But she loved him. She didn't care if he wasn't a perfect man. She spent her life living with him to know him well enough. One can't just eat together with someone and sleep under the same roof without knowing some intimate details about the other person.

She loved him, but she also feared him.

One night, she awoke from a nightmare, sweaty and panting, the comforter crumpled under her feet. She sat up and held a palm to her forehead, shooing away the lingering dream with steady breaths. Scared and alone, she crept to her door and opened it slowly to avoid waking the sorcerer with a creak. She was grateful that he did not lock the door to her room at night, though his own bedroom door and the door to the tower were always locked. With a heavy sigh, she made a beeline to the window for some fresh air when her eye caught a flicker of light. She turned, seeing that Cedric was hunched over the table in the kitchen, a book under him, and a candle lighting a small bubble around his face. She was not sure if she should disturb him, fearing he would scold her for getting out of bed, but before she could turn back to her room, she heard him call her name.

"Sofia."

His voice was tired and kind. Sofia turned back around and walked over to him, kneeling when she came to his side.

"What are you doing out of bed?" he asked, not bothering to look up

from his book.

"I had a bad dream," she whispered, her voice cracking from a lack of use.

This time, he turned to her and smiled. He reached out and stroked the side of her sweaty face, lifting a soaking lock of her warm caramel brown hair away from her cheek. "It was just a dream, my dear. Go back to sleep now."

She rested her forearms on his lap and touched them with her chin. "Why are you not asleep?"

"Insomnia," he sighed. She tilted her head and sighed after him, wondering how she could possibly help, when he added, "I often can't sleep when you don't sing."

She frowned. He knew. He knew she broke the rule about opening the window. Would he yell at her now? Was she going to be punished?

"What do you mean?" She played dumb.

"I told you never to open the window," he started, "I never said you couldn't look out the window, but I did specifically say not to open it. Would it have been so hard to sit by the window and sing with it closed?"

"I'm sorry I broke the rule," she said. "I didn't want to disrespect you. I just wanted to look outside."

He tried to look angry, but between his tiredness and Sofia's mind-melting face, he unwillingly softened his expression. "You are not a bad girl, Sofia" he patted her head. "But I did set a rule, and you broke it. Therefore, you will see a punishment in the morning." When she hung her head, he added, "But if you would like, you may sit by the window at nightâ€"without opening it. And, like I said, I cannot sleep without your song."

She smiled. "Shall I sing for you every night, then?"

He stared at her kindly for a moment before scooping up the back of her head, leaning forward, and kissed her forehead. "How could I refuse that, my dear?"

She stared into his eyes, darting from his left to his right. They were colorfully lit and glossy from the mix of the candle and the moonlight. She could see the flecks of gold glowing under the darker brown lines in his eyes. His black hair had a dull halo, and the streaks of silver falling softly against his temples sparkled. His skin was pale and beautiful. She mused how this angelic portrait of him mirrored the beauty she saw in his dark soul. Despite her own doubts about him, she accepted him for who he was. Being the only person in her contact, she couldn't afford to hate him. And she didn't hate him. She loved him, perhaps even a little too much.

And she wanted to show her love to him.

She leaned forward slowly. It was not really out of fear that she took her time, but she did not want to be scolded for her actions.

Going slowly was the only way to ask his permission. She blinked rapidly, parting her lips slightly, her pouty mouth drawing near his in an otherworldly way. Her lids slid closed, waiting to press against the warmth of his own mouth...

...And she heard his wooden chair clatter against the stone blocks. Flinching slightly, her eyes shot open to behold him standing dauntingly before her, his face shadowed, his fists balled and shaking. He was angry.

She rose to her feet slowly. "I'm sorry, Cedric," she whispered. "I'm sorry. I just wanted toâ€"

"You don't know what you want," he huffed at her, "You play a dangerous game."

"I'm sorry," she repeated. "Please don't be mad at me."

"I do not deserve you," he whispered under his breath. "Let me never see you try this again. Go to bed, now."

She didn't have to be told twice. Her tiny feet gave a start, and she scurried to her room, leaking tears. She loved him. She did. She thought he loved her as well. But maybe he didn't. And now, he was too angry for her to ask him about it. She had crossed a line, and she surely knew that she would have a second punishment waiting for her come tomorrow's sun.

* * *

><p>Author's Note: I really wanted this to be kind of a mix of Beauty and the Beast, Hunchback, and Tangled with a dark romantic twist. I didn't really want to stick with the 18 year old factor to scrape by with being appropriate, so I just decided to make Sofia my age.

2. Punishments and Birthdays

Author's Note: I think a little Nathan and Shilo from Repo are sneaking into this story as well, haha! Let's not forget to thank Investigation Discovery for some of the dark atmosphere of this story.

* * *

><p>It was clear to the sorcerer that he was no more than a crooked man. He did not need anyone to tell him that. No one ever even came into his contact to be able to tell him that. To the small village a mile or so from their tower, he was a quiet old man who visited every so often to buy some bread and other material goods and then be on his way. He never caused any trouble for the neighbors. But he caused trouble at home, and would blame it on Sofia. And for that, he hated his very existence.<p>

From the get go, all he did was take from the poor young girl. Being a helpless little child, she could not do anything but comply. He had taken her family, her friends, her education, her luxuries, and even her amulet, and forced her into this secluded existence. He could not call it much more than an existence, since she was not really

thriving and growing as she should be. And those rules that he made her follow...they were ridiculous, even to his degree. And if he thought it couldn't possibly get any worse...she never complained. He wished she would. He wished for her to rebel, or talk back, or even slap him back to his own corrupt senses, but she only repaid him with compassion and forgiveness, which in turn made him hate himself even more. It was an endless, vicious cycle of guilt and blame. Sofia was a living mirror reflecting the horrible choices he made for both of their lives. Every time he looked at her, his fractured heart would crack a bit more. He could see the result of his actions every time he looked at her. A beautiful young woman forced to live a sequestered life as the slave of a wicked old man. It was madness. And why? For no reason at all. At least, he could not think of a reason. Perhaps it was to keep her from getting justice against him at first, but now, he was no longer afraid of judgment for kidnapping the princess. He wished someone would come for him and sentence him to a miserable rest of his life. There was no one else to judge him but himself, and he couldn't bring himself to take responsibility for his own actions. He wished something, anything, would intervene on behalf of Sofia and give her the justice she didn't even know she deserved.

He didn't know why he even needed her. He had already taken her amulet from her. He was powerful enough to hide an entire tower from view, and smart enough to create a signature disguise for himself. But no matter how much he felt a guilty pull in his conscience inclining him to do at least one noble thing in his life, he just couldn't bring himself to do it. When she sat by the fire reading her favorite book about magic, or hummed a tune while wiping the table in the kitchen, he could feel himself melting at the sight of her. She looked happy. She never complained or asked for anything, and all he did was take from her. She deserves true happiness. It was times like these that he knew she deserved her freedom. She had stayed true to the gracious soul she had always been. She looked for the best in him, though he doubted there was much behind the wall of feigned kindnesses toward her. He truly didn't deserve the grace of her presence every single day. The world needed more beautiful, kind creatures like Sofia, but he selfishly kept her all to himself, sucking the youth and opportunity from her. Of all the tragedies that could happen to a woman, Cedric considered himself the greatest offender. He robbed her of her very own life.

He often sat up late at night pondering what it was that was keeping him from separating from her. Why did he need her so much? Was it the fact that she was the only person in his life to value him as a human being, despite the rest of the world telling him that he was a waste of space? Was it her encouragement to him when he failed, or her rewarding him when he succeeded? Was it how she naturally brought out the best in him just by physically being by his side? If one person could change another by merely existing, if one person could give to another and expect nothing in return, to do good for the sake of doing good, that person was Sofia. And he was ruining her.

He robbed her of her childhood. He took her away from her home at the tender age of nine years old and immediately forced her into hard work, practically making her his slave. He would not allow even her to read any material that was not strictly educational. The ideas of fairy tales and fantasy might put dangerous ideas into the young girl's head and give her reason to escape from him. He couldn't have that. He just couldn't. But despite his best efforts to raise her as

best he could, he knew she wasn't his child. She was rightfully a princess, certainly not deserving of being raised and taught by an old sorcerer. He had taken away her luxuries and creativity in favor of mundane chores, textbooks, and ridiculous rules. And she, being a child at the time, just stood there and took it. Now that she was a young woman, she could have rebelled, but she was far too attached to him to even think of doing so. He had been slowly poisoning her mind for the past fifteen years to the point where she could not even remember her own mother's face. She had nothing to remember her old family by, not a picture, or a trinket, or a letter. She didn't even know if they missed her, or even remembered her. And she didn't seem to care about it. She was Sofia, the same spirit, but in a different body, in a different life. She remembered little to nothing about being a princess. It was as though she were never raised in the castle. And Cedric would always hate himself for that. He could release her to her true life anytime, for he already had the amulet, but he could never bring himself to part from her. He was keeping her for his own selfish needs, though whatever he needed her for, he would never know. He was a monster.

In his vain efforts, he tried to make it up to her. Not that he ever could make up to her what he had taken in years and innocence, but he did try to give her the best in this new life. He treated her like his own daughter, showing her affections and guiding her through the crazy, burdensome bumps of growing up. He gave her every freedom inside of the tower to expand her interests in knowledge. She had picked up sewing, crafting, cooking, and of course, magic. She was quite good at magic. She was learning from him, after all. Though he should be concerned that she might one day try to use her magic against him, he was far too proud of his pupil's success and natural interest in the subject to really give any heed to that caution, and the spells he taught her were harmless enough. She dabbled in potion making with him, learned about medicinal herbal remedies, and practiced several of his favorite spells. When they were finished with their lessons, he would take her wand from her and place it next to his in a glass case and lock it up, along with the potion and herb cabinet. Then, he would lock the door to the room. She would not be able to enter it if she wanted to, without his permission. The magic room, and her wand, were off limits to her when they were not taking lessons.

Despite him being the weed to choke and stunt her growth, she flowered into a beautiful young woman, not only in personality, but in physical beauty. She was a living, breathing angel. Her wavy brown locks had grown down to her waist, her facial features had matured and evened out remarkably similar to her mother's, and her body showed the dips and curves of a woman. She was quite the scrawny and short little girl when he had first met her, but now she could practically look him straight in the eyes without lifting her head. She certainly was a sight to behold. Another reason he did not deserve her.

All these things considered, it was no wonder why he overreacted when Sofia tried to kiss him. He wouldn't have objected under any other circumstance, but to see her yearn for him as though he were some catch, not knowing who he truly was or what he had deprived her of, broke his heart a little more. There was a whole world out there, perhaps even another man who could be everything to Sofia that Cedric was not. But he should have seen this coming...growing up, there were some awkward conversations about her body that needed to be had when

she reached puberty, but he never made any advances toward her. She must have used her own knowledge of sex and romance to build up a strong want for him. And she didn't even know what she was getting into.

* * *

><p>Two punishments in one day was a thing unheard of. Sofia had rarely ever disobeyed him, and she would scold herself when she did. But having two offenses against him...<p>

Sofia lay in bed longer than she should have. The sun was just over the tops of the trees, meaning it was time for the morning chores to be done and breakfast to be served hot on the table. But the floor remained unswept, the table unwiped, and the meal unmade. Failing to take charge of the morning would probably result in a third punishment, but at this point, she did not care. Cedric could punish her all he liked, as long as he gave her some attention. Right now, she felt hated and alone.

There was a knock on the door, and Cedric entered. She did not move, but pulled her quilt higher over her face and hid a snuffle. She didn't want him to see that she had been crying. It might make him angry.

He closed the door gently and shuffled over to her bed. She felt a heavy pressing on the mattress as he sat beside her and stroked her shoulder through the quilt.

"Are you feeling all right, my dear? Are you feeling ill?" His voice was calm, but she was glad her body was turned away from him so he could not see her face.

"Do you hate me?" She asked after a long moment of silence.

He stopped stroking her. "Why would I hate you, Sofia?" His large hand lay atop her shoulder. The warmth felt good through the blanket. It was a comforting gesture.

"You were mad at me last night. I already broke a rule and didn't want you to be angrier at me," she spoke slowly to avoid a congested pronunciation of her words. She sniffed softly, trying to clear her nose.

"I could never hate you, Sofia. You are like a daughter to me," he began stroking her arm again, this time with more pressure to assure her. "But daughters don't kiss their fathers. It would be inappropriate." It was a pathetic excuse not nearly close to the truth, but lies were all he had to tell her now.

"Will I have two punishments today?" Her voice cracked a bit.

He sighed. "I'm afraid so, my dear. But it will be nothing too much for you to bear. In fact, what do you think your punishments should be?"

She rubbed her eye and sat up, hugging her knees. "After I clean and make breakfast, I will reorganize the bookcase and scrub the floor."

"Fine idea," he kissed her forehead, and she smiled. Even when she was crying, she was beautiful. But she shouldn't have been crying in the first place. All thanks to him again, her blaming herself for his doings. He got up to leave, but stopped when he came to the door. "Why don't you rest a bit more? I will make breakfast today. I'll call you when it's ready." And he was gone.

* * *

><p>In one week, it would be her birthday. She would be twenty five this year in June. It was the one day of the year that he allowed her extra freedom and granted her anything she wished. Being a sorcerer, it was not hard to conjure up anything she could have asked for, such as a pretty necklace or a beautiful new dress. But, being the modest girl that she was, she rarely asked for such things.<p>

Cedric sat by the fire on the eve of her birthday with a cup of hot tea, courtesy of Sofia. He stared into the intense flames, contemplating. It would be yet another year with the girl, with how many more to go on after. He sipped the bitter substance and felt the hot liquid ease the lump in his throat. If only the flames in the fireplace before him could melt the hardness in his soul like it warmed the chill of the evening air. But it would be yet another year of putting off the inevitable. He knew fate would have her back, but not just yet. He took another sip and then rubbed his tired, old eyes. Sixteen years was not something he could make up to her with trinkets and gifts drawn from magical elements. Just as he finished the last of his cup, Sofia appeared from behind the threshold of the room and leaned against the carved wooden panel on the wall, smiling kindly at him.

He studied her, smiling back. "You barely look twenty five," he said.

"I don't feel like it," she said. "Does that make me old?"

"My dear, you are far from old. I would know," he chuckled.

She inched toward him and sank down to the floor. The crackling fire made her sleepy and relaxed. The scent of firewood and black tea was her favorite thing that reminded her of Cedric. "Did you enjoy your tea?"

"Brewed to perfection," he boasted proudly. "Now, down to business," he set his cup and saucer down on the table next to him and reached his hand toward her. She crawled toward him excitedly and leaned her arms on his lap. Not that she was his dog that he made her sit on the floor, but it was in her long-forgotten country girl roots that she preferred the floor over the sofa, and she felt closest to him being able to touch him like this.

He stroked her silky hair and smiled, admiring her features. "What would you like for your birthday?"

She smiled back and cocked her head mischievously, making him smile wider, as he thought he might really be in for a challenge this year to keep her pleased. Though modest and gracious, she was known by him for her annual antics.

"You know, you never tell me when your birthday is, Cedric," she

replied.

"And you will never know. You ask every year on your birthday about my birthday. Do be a little less modest and learn to enjoy yourself, okay?" He continued stroking her hair, enjoying the sensation.

"I want to do something special for you, too," she said, giving him the face she knew he could never say no to, "So for my birthday this year, I want you to tell me when your birthday is."

"That is the one thing I cannot tell you, my dear," he said, resisting her charm.

"I thought you said you would not deny me anything I wanted on my birthday!" She teased.

"You will have to suffer me this one thing, then. But anything else is yours." He said.

She sat staring at him, thinking of what else she could ask for. To her own nearsighted knowledge, she had everything she could ever want. What else was there? She had no other idea...

...She sat up slowly, lifting her chin from his lap and squeezing the soft fabric of his robes piled on his lap.

"Have you thought of something?" He asked.

She inhaled slowly, staring at him with a blank face. "I want...a kiss."

He frowned and raised a dark brow at her, causing a dip in his forehead. A shock of guilt came upon her, and she lowered her gaze. Perhaps she should not have asked for such a thing.

"Do you mean this?" He leaned down, his warm hand on her cheek, his thumb in front of her ear and his fingers tickling the nape her neck, and moved to kiss her forehead. She saw he misunderstood what she was saying and counteracted him by lifting her chin so he would aim toward her lips, grasping his wrist. With a bit of finagling, she followed his lips as his face moved side to side. Wondering why the girl was fidgeting so much, he pulled back.

"Just where do you want me to kiss you?" He asked.

She tightened her thin fingers around his wrist. "I wanted to kiss you on the lips."

His back flopped against the seat with a groan and pinched the bridge of his nose. "Sofia, we have been through this. It is not appropriate for you to kiss me."

"But you said I could have anything I wanted," her voice grew strong with courage to finally press him on the matter. "You have already denied me one thing. There is nothing else I want."

"Please, Sofia, I don't want to have to punish you on your birthday." He sighed.

She furrowed her brows and climbed up onto his lap, pressing her

pelvis down onto his thighs and cupped his face, stroking his soft skin with her thumbs.

"Sofia," his fingers left his forehead, and his tone rang with warning.

"I don't care if you punish me for this," she said, her voice and face pleading. "Please, punish me if you want, but give me this." She leaned forward, but was met with his arm, and in a dazed instant, she found herself on the floor, dull pain following her to the ground. He stood up and began walking away.

"You have disobeyed me twice now. You cannot just take what you want," he hissed. He frantically reached out to his scattered thoughts, his mind pulsing, trying to think of a harsher punishment for repeating an offense for the first time in her life. He was starting to lose his control over her, and if he hated anything more than the things he had done to her, it was losing control. But before he could open his mouth again, she hushed him with two small-voiced words.

"You did."

He turned around to see her looking at him with misty eyes, sitting where he had thrown her with her skirts scattered about and her back hunched in defeat.

Though guilt closed around him in a dark circle, he pridefully refused to be in the wrong tonight. He had come so far. Why not go all the way?

"I see you are having a rebellious phase. We will discuss your behavior tomorrow morning." He turned again.

"Cedric."

Her voice alone was enough to stop him.

"What is it?" He asked in annoyance without turning around.

"Do you love me?"

He paused and heaved a sigh. He wanted her. He needed her. Sometimes, he even hated her. He could not explain the raw emotions he felt toward her. Most of them were reflections of his own poor decisions. There was no blame that could possibly be held to the girl, and he knew that. But did he love her?

"Goodnight, Sofia."

And he made his way quietly toward his bedroom.

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><p>Author's Note: I feel good with where this story's going so far. It is a bit stressful to write given the material, especially since I see Cedfia being a happy, carefree shipping, but I have a few ideas in my vault, and finally the details for this one came to me while I was at work. I filled up a page with ideas and started having more ideas while I was driving home. I kept repeating them to myself

so I wouldn't forget, but man did I speed home and run into the house to write it all down! Such is the life of an author...My sister and I have been writing our own original stories since we were kids, and our favorite joke was an author's worst fear is running out of paper.

End
file.